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A DISSERTATION UPON THE SUBJECT OF CIRCUMCISION.

CONTAINING,

An INQUIRY into the Original of this RELIGIOUS RITE;

With an Attempt

To ſettle ſome Points of ancient Hiſtory and Chronology, by the help of this Medium, in a new Method.

Μετὰ ταῦτα τὸ περιτέμνεσθαι τὰ αἰδοῖα μὴ διαβαλὼν ὁ Κέλσος ὑπὸ Ιουδαίων γενόμενον φησὶν "ἀπὸ Αιγυπτίων αὐτὸ ελη-"λυθέναι." Αἰγυπτίοις μᾶλλον ἢ Μωσεῖ πιστεύσας, λέγοντι πρῶτον ἐν ἀνθρώποις περιτεμνῆσθαι τὸν Αβραάμ.

Origen contr. Celſ. lib. I.

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A DISSERTATION UPON THE SUBJECT OF CIRCUMCISION.

IT ſeems to be a matter beyond all diſpute, that the rite of *Circumciſion*, as uſed and practiſed by the *Jews*, was a *divine inſtitution*. For it was the appointed ſign and token of God's covenant with their father *Abraham*; and with his ſeed alſo, (*a*) as the nature of the Rite itſelf aptly ſignified, and emblematically expreſſed. But becauſe Circumciſion was anciently in uſe among ſome other nations beſides the *Jews*, particularly the *Colchians*, *Egyptians*,

(*a*) Gen. xvii. 7—13.

gyptians, and *Ethiopians*, whom *Herodotus* (*b*) affirms to be the only people in the world, that were circumciſed *from the beginning*; this hath occaſioned a controverſy among learned men about the *original* of Circumciſion (*c*). And, upon impartially conſidering their different *hypotheſes*, I moſt incline to the opinion of Biſhop *Patrick*, and others, who maintain, that "*Abraham* was the firſt perſon in the world that was circumciſed." But *Abraham* was circumciſed in obedience to a divine command. For, God *gave him the covenant of Circumciſion* (*d*). Conſequently Circumciſion was originally a divine inſtitution.

Now, according to this view of the caſe, the *Egyptians*, in particular, muſt have derived Circumciſion from one branch or other of *Abraham*'s family; and moſt probably by the line of *Iſhmael*, for ſundry reaſons. Becauſe there was both an *affinity*, and likewiſe a near *vicinity*, between the *Iſhmaelites* and the *Egyptians*. For, as *Iſhmael*'s mother, viz. *Hagar*, herſelf was an *Egyptian* by deſcent (*e*), ſo ſhe took him a wife out of the land of *Egypt* (*f*); and his poſterity ſettled upon the borders of *Egypt* (*g*). All which circumſtances concurred to gain them an

(*b*) Lib. II.
(*c*) See Pædo-Baptiſm, part II. page 19. in the note.
(*d*) Acts vii. 8. (*e*) Gen. xvi. 1.
(*f*) Gen. xxi. 21. (*g*) Gen. xxv. 18.

an intereſt and connexions in that country, whereof they might make their own uſe and advantage at a proper time.

But the circumſtance that weighs moſt with me, and upon which I lay the greateſt ſtreſs, is *this*, viz. That the *Iſhmaelites* circumciſed their children at thirteen years of age; *Iſhmael* himſelf happening to be ſo old at the time of his circumciſion (*b*). The *Saracens* alſo in *Spain* and *Afric*, of the ſame extraction, obſerved the ſame cuſtom (*i*). From whence, it may be ſtrongly inferred, and I think, fairly concluded, that the *Egyptians* derived Circumciſion from the poſterity of *Abraham*, by the line of *Iſhmael*. Becauſe the *Egyptians* are ſaid to have circumciſed their children very near the ſame age (*k*). Accordingly, it is the opinion of the learned *Bochart* (*l*), that "the Rite of "Circumciſion deſcended from *Abraham* to "the *Arabians*, and from the *Arabians* to "the *Egyptians*."

From this account then it follows, by natural conſequence, that the *Arabians*, or the *Iſhmaelites* inhabiting *Arabia*, did, at one time, and by one way, or another, obtain great power in *Egypt*, without which they could

(*b*) Gen. xvii. 25. Joſeph. Jud. Antiq. lib. I. cap. xiii. Origen Philocal. cap. xxiii.
(*i*) Patrick Com. on Gen. xvii. 11.
(*k*) Ambroſ. de Abraham. lib. II.
(*l*) Geogr. ſacr. lib. IV, cap. xxxii. part I. in Phaleg.

could not have been able to introduce and eſtabliſh in that country ſo diſagreeable a Rite as that of Circumciſion. But, *when*, or *how*, and by what means, or method, they obtained this power, are points which want clearing up, and which therefore I ſhall endeavour to elucidate, ſo far as the darkneſs of ancient times will afford us any light in ſuch obſcure matters. And in order to this end, I take the liberty of ſuppoſing — "That theſe "*Arabians* invaded *Egypt*, and made themſelves maſters of the country, within a "ſhort time after the *children of Iſrael* left "it; when the *Egyptians* might be more "eaſily diſpoſed, to ſubmit to the Rite of "Circumciſion, in conſideration that this ſacred Rite was uſed by the *Iſraelites* themſelves, whom the providence of God had "ſo lately honoured and diſtinguiſhed with "ſuch peculiar marks of his favour."

In ſupport of which hypotheſis, let me beſpeak the candid reader's attention to the following particulars.

(1.) Immediately upon the *Exodus*, or the departure of the *Iſraelites* from thence, *Egypt* muſt have been in a very broken and ſhattered condition, after ſo many *plagues*, and the loſs of ſo many *inhabitants*, and particularly by the deſtruction of *Pharaoh*, *and all his hoſt*. Conſequently it lay open and expoſed to any hoſtile invaſion. So that if the *Egyptians* had any enemies in their neighbourhood,

bourhood, *then* was the proper time to ſhew and exert themſelves. And common policy would direct and prompt them, to embrace the opportunity that was given them, for invading *Egypt* with all their forces.

(2.) There is ground to think, that the *Egyptians* and *Arabians*, were upon no good terms at that time. For the *Arabians*, one may naturally ſuppoſe, were then grown into a ſtrong and powerful people, deſcended from the *twelve* ſons of *Iſhmael*, which were *twelve princes according to their nations* (*m*), equal in number to the *tribes of Iſrael*. And was not this enough to create jealouſies and emulations between them and the *Egyptians*, as they bordered ſo near upon each other? Beſides, as the poſterity of *Iſhmael* were *Egyptians* themſelves, by his mother's ſide, as was hinted before; and probably, intermarried with the *Egyptians*, after his own example; a ſuſpicion might ariſe in the minds of the *Egyptians*, that they caſt a wiſhful eye upon that fruitful country, and only waited for a favourable opportunity to tranſplant themſelves into the land of *Egypt*. Moreover, miſunderſtandings might eaſily happen on account of trade and commerce; a common bone of contention between neighbouring ſtates. And the *Iſhmaelites* had traffic with *Egypt*, in very early and ancient times (*n*). It is farther obſervable, that when the

(*m*) Gen. xxv. 16. (*n*) Gen. xxxvii. 25.

the king of *Egypt* began to perſecute and oppreſs the *children of Iſrael*, he diſcovered ſome apprehenſions of a common enemy, and made uſe of that pretext for his unjuſt and cruel proceedings againſt them (*o*), and none more likely to be the object of his fear and jealouſy, than the enterprizing *Arabians*, whoſe martial ſpirit ſeems to have been deſcribed and foretold, in what was ſaid of *Iſhmael* (*p*), viz. *And he ſhall be a wild man; his hand will be againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt him: and he ſhall dwell in the preſence of all his brethren.* But to come yet nearer to the period in view. — The *jewiſh* hiſtorian (*q*) gives an account of a war with the *Ethiopians*, in which *Moſes* commanded the *Egyptian* forces, and beſieged *Saba*, a capital city of *Ethiopia*. Now theſe *Ethiopians*, upon whom the *Egyptians* made war under the conduct and command of *Moſes*, muſt have been *Arabians*. For *Saba* was a metropolitan city of *Arabia* (*r*). And the *Arabians* were anciently called *Ethiopians*, that is, the *Eaſtern*, bordering upon the *Red-ſea* (*s*). And as *Moſes* was *mighty in*

(*o*) Exod. i. 10. (*p*) Gen. xvi. 12.
(*q*) Joſeph. Jud. Antiq. lib. II. cap. x.
(*r*) Diodor. Sic. lib. III.
(*s*) Euſtath. in Homer. Odyſſ. page 13. Edit. Froben. — This remark may ſerve to clear *Joſephus* of the blunder which hath been charged upon him; as if he had placed the city *Saba*, in *Ethiopia*, commonly ſo called. See Shuckford's Connect. Vol. II. page 335.

in word and deed (*t*), "even before he re-
"ceived any particular commiſſion from
"God, for the delivery of his people out
"of *Egypt*." This renders the foregoing account of his military exploits againſt the *Arabians* more probable, and gives it the fair appearance of hiſtorical truth (*u*). Now laying all theſe things together, there ſeems to be ſome foundation for ſuppoſing, that the *Arabians* invaded *Egypt*, and ſettled themſelves in it, very ſoon after the *children of Iſrael* left that country, when the power of the *Egyptians* was reduced to the loweſt ebb. It is true, ſome authors of great note, have imagined, that *Egypt* was a potent and flouriſhing kingdom, about that time. For they make *Seſoſtris*, the famous conqueror, to be the ſon of that *Pharaoh*, who was drowned in the Red-ſea. But this is a very groundleſs notion, as I think hath been fully ſhewn by a learned writer (*x*). With reſpect to *Seſoſtris*, he is much more likely to be the ſame with *Amenophis* (*y*), the ſon of that king who *expelled*

(*t*) Acts vii. 22. (*u*) See *Whiſton*'s Appendix.
(*x*) Shuckford. Connect. vol. III. p. 212, &c.
(*y*) *Amenophis* and *Seſoſtris* are names pretty much of the ſame import; as the former may be a compound of *Haman Apis*, i. e. a *mad bull*; and the latter derived from *Gaſheſh Tor*, i. e. *a goring bull*. The ſame illuſtrious prince might, by a more reſpectful name, be called *Jupiter*; a word compounded of *Japah Tor*, i. e. *the lovely bull*. And here, perhaps, the reader will think

expelled the *ſhepherds*. Which eaſily accounts for the miſtake aforeſaid; as the ſhepherds were ſuppoſed by ſome to be the *Iſraelites*, in purſuing of whom out of *Egypt*, *Pharaoh* was drowned in the Red-ſea.

(3.) Theſe *Arabians*, I take to be the famous *ſhepherds*, who invaded and conquered *Egypt*, as mentioned by *Manetho* (z). Different conjectures have been made upon this head; and the learned have been at a loſs to know, who this people were, and from whence they came. But, if I am not miſtaken, their very name [ὑκσως] *Hyceſos* may decide the point. *Joſephus* [ibid.] hath given us two different etymologies of this word, which are not worth mentioning; as they plainly ſhew that he was quite uncertain about the true meaning and origin of the name.

of the famous *Jupiter Haman*. But, who this perſon really was, is uncertain. *Joſephus* hath been alleged, as making *Seſoſtris* to be the ſame with *Seſac*, or *Shiſhak*: 1 Kings xiv. 25. But this notion hath been diſproved by very learned writers. See Bp. Cumberland, Sanction. page 407, &c. and Dr. S. Chandler's vindication of the hiſtory of the old teſtament, part II. ſect. 14. And it is plain from his own calculations, that if *Joſephus* took *Sethoſis* in *Manetho* for *Seſoſtris*, as he ſeems to have done; he could not poſſibly ſuppoſe him to be the ſame perſon with *Seſac*; though after all, *Seſac* and *Sethoſis* may be the ſame. As to *Seſoſtris*, he appears to have been an earlier perſon; and his age muſt be referred to the times of the *Judges*, according to the learned *Perizonius*. Egypt. Orig. Inveſtig. cap. 16.

(z) Joſeph. contr. Apion. lib. I.

name. And yet, perhaps, an implicit regard to him is the true reaſon that perſons have acquieſced in his account, without giving themſelves the trouble of farther inquiry; otherwiſe a very natural, eaſy, and obvious *etymology* ſeems to offer itſelf at the firſt ſight. For *Hycſos* may be very well derived from *Cuſhim*. Which word, by a tranſpoſition of the letter *Caph* after *Vau*, and changing the *termination* from the *Phenician* to the *Greek* tongue, in which *Manetho* wrote, is *Hychſtros*, or *Hycſos*, the word in queſtion. Now *Cuſh* in ſcripture, is the common name for *Arabia (a)*. And ſo *Cuſhim*, in the plural number, denotes *Arabians*. Accordingly *Manetho* ſays, that ſome took the *Hycſos* to be *Arabians*. Which point may be farther argued from hence, viz. that the character given of the former, agrees to the accounts we have of the latter. For the *Hycſos*, (as their name alſo hath been commonly thought to import) are ſaid to have lived upon *paſturage*. And *Philo* relates of the *Arabians*, *(b)* that "both old and young, men and "women, breed cattle, and tend their "flocks, even perſons of the higheſt rank." The like account we have of that people alſo in *Diodorus Siculus* (*c*). From the whole then,

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(*a*) Hyde. de relig. vet. perſ. cap. 2. pag. 38. J. Cleric. in Gen. x. 6.

(*b*) De vita Moſis, lib. I.

(*c*) Antiq. lib. III. cap. 12.

then, I conclude, that *Manetho*'s *ſhepherds* were *Arabians*, who invaded *Egypt* preſently after the departure of the *children of Iſrael*. And in order to obviate the chronological difficulties, which may ſeem to attend this hypotheſis, I proceed to obſerve—

(4.) The ſtory of the *Egyptian ſhepherds*, and that of the *Iſraelites*, are confounded together in *Manetho*'s account of the former. (A miſtake which might more eaſily happen, according to the ſuppoſition I go upon, viz. that the former immediately ſucceeded the latter.) No one can reaſonably doubt of this, who will read over that account, with any attention, as it is given us by *Joſephus*. For, on the one hand, ſome things are related of the *ſhepherds*, which plainly point at the *Iſraelites*; v. g. their removing out of *Egypt* into *Judea*. On the other hand, ſome things are ſaid of the former, which are no ways applicable to the latter; as, e. g. their holding the ſovereignty of *Egypt*, under their *ſix* kings ſucceſſively. A circumſtance, which by no means agrees to the ſtate and condition of the *Iſraelites*, in that country. So that we have plainly here one ſtory made out of two different hiſtories, oddly jumbled together. A thing the more excuſable in *Manetho*, as he had probably no good authentic memoirs, to furniſh him with proper materials for writing a clear, diſtinct, and

circum-

circumſtantial hiſtory, of ſuch ancient tranſactions. *Joſephus* himſelf ſaw ſo much of the *Iſraelites*, in this ſtory of the *ſhepherds*, that he ſeems to have applied it wholly to them. And in this miſtake he hath been followed by many writers, both ancient, and modern.

(5.) In conſequence of what hath been obſerved under the laſt article, the period aſſigned to the *ſhepherds* in *Egypt*, muſt include the time of the *Iſraelites* ſojourning in that country. This period is ſaid to be 511 years, which may be divided thus; from the time of *Joſeph*'s coming into *Egypt*, to the *Exodus*, are computed 237 years *(d)*. The year after the *Exodus*, the *Arabian ſhepherds* may be ſuppoſed to have invaded and conquered *Egypt*. The Paſtor kings, one with another, reigned in all 260 years. After the expulſion of the Paſtor kings, mention is made of a *ſecond* expulſion of the *ſhepherds* out of *Egypt*, which appears to have happened 13 years after the former. All which numbers put together, amount to 511 years preciſely, the period aſſigned to the *ſhepherds* in *Egypt*. [237.+1.+260.+13.=511.] And according to this calculation, the expulſion of the Paſtor kings, happened 261 years after the *Exodus*, which, according to *Petavius (e)*, was

(d) Uſſer annal.

(e) Ration. temp. Par. II. pag. 240.

was the very year of the *Midianite* invaſion. The ſaid invaſion is repreſented, in the ſacred hiſtory, very formidable *(f)*. *For they came up with their camels, and their tents, and they came as graſhoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to deſtroy it. And Iſrael was greatly impoveriſhed, becauſe of the Midianites.* Now, as this invaſion of the land of Iſrael *ſynchronizes* with the expulſion of the Paſtor kings, according to the preceding account, ſo it might be *occaſioned* thereby. For the *Midianites*, bordering upon *Arabia*, were conſidered as part of the *Arabians (g)*. Hence we find them joined together as neighbours, ſharing the ſame fate *(h)*. *I ſaw the tents of Cuſhan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.* When the *Arabian ſhepherds* returned out of *Egypt* in great numbers, unto their own country, they might want a preſent ſubſiſtence, and ſo join with the *Midianites* in the invaſion aforeſaid; which was a great addition to their ſtrength. And expreſs mention is made of the *Iſhmaelites*, with their *golden ear-rings*, being a party in this affair (*i*). This coincidence of events, as ſtated above, ſeems greatly to favour

(*f*) Judges vi. 5, 6.
(*g*) Philo. de Fortitud. and S. Hieronym. in Ezek. xxv.
(*h*) Habak. iii. 7. Pol. Synopſ. in loc.
(*i*) Judges viii. 24.

vour my hypotheſis, and ſupport that notion advanced before, viz. That the period aſſigned to the *ſhepherds* in *Egypt*, includes the time of the *Iſraelites* ſojourning in that country; and ſo it muſt be divided between them. And though this way of accounting for it, ſhortens that period of the *ſhepherds* reigning in *Egypt*; yet, under their *ſix* kings, *Salatis*, *Bæon*, *Apachmas*, *Apophis*, *Janias*, *(k) and laſt of all*, *Apis*, they reigned long enough to introduce and eſtabliſh the *Rite of Circumciſion* among the *Egyptians*; eſpecially under the favourable circumſtance, taken notice of before, and which it may be proper to mention here again, viz. the ſignal honour which the Providence of God had ſo lately put upon Circumciſion, by the ſtrange deliverance of his own people, who uſed this ſacred Rite, and that no leſs aſtoniſhing deſtruction of their enemies. If the *ſhepherds* had any other kings in *Egypt*, beſides theſe mentioned, why are not their names recorded by *Joſephus*, along with the reſt? But as he ſays, that *Apis* reigned, *laſt of all*, or *after all*; the pretence, that they were ſucceeded by a line of other Paſtor kings, who reigned after them in *Egypt* 250 years more, ſeems to be a mere ſhift to help out a lame ſtory, and make up the reckoning.

Having

(k) ἐπὶ πᾶσι. Joſeph.

Having now delivered the reſult of my thoughts upon the ſubject of Circumciſion, and endeavoured, as I propoſed, in this diſſertation to ſettle ſome points of ancient *hiſtory* and *chronology* by a new *medium* and *method*; I might proceed to corroborate my argument by examining the different hypotheſes of *Uſher*, *Marſham*, *Newton*, concerning thoſe points; all which I have conſidered with care and attention, and think them liable to greater objections than the ſcheme I have formed and purſued. But I ſhall here conclude with the following Reflections, which may be of more uſe and ſervice, to the generality of readers.

(1.) Divine wiſdom knows beſt what Rites and Ceremonies are moſt proper under any religious diſpenſation. Therefore, whatever poſitive Inſtitutions God may ſee fit to appoint in his church, it is his people's wiſdom and duty to acquieſce in the appointment. For, as *Cæſar's image and ſuperſcription* ſtamps a current value upon any coin; ſo the divine authority gives a ſacred ſignificancy to every thing, that is marked with it.

(2.) A change in religious Rites may be introduced by a proper authority. When the Proto-martyr *Stephen* was accuſed by the *jews* of *blaſphemy*, for ſaying, *that Jeſus of Nazareth ſhould change the cuſtoms which Moſes*

ſes delivered them (l); he alleged, amongſt other things, in his own defence (*m*), that *God gave to Abraham the covenant of Circumciſion*; which was then a *new* thing. Therefore, ſince God delivered unto *Abraham* a new religious Rite, there could be no abſurdity in ſuppoſing, and much leſs any impiety, in ſaying, that, by the ſame authority, a *new* diſpenſation ſhould take place, under the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, which was to ſucceed and ſuperſede the *Law of Moſes*. It is true, for men to take upon them, without a divine warrant, to innovate in matters of Religion, and to change the Ordinances of heaven of their own accord, muſt be high preſumption. But this was not the caſe here. For, *God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the holy Ghoſt, and with power* (*n*). Chriſt had *all power given unto him in heaven, and in earth* (*o*). Therefore he was inveſted with proper authority to lay aſide *old* cuſtoms, and to appoint *new* one's in their place; which accordingly he did, with regard, particularly, to *Circumciſion*, by ſubſtituting *Baptiſm* in its room and ſtead *(p)*, though without *limiting* it to any certain age.

(3.) It is a very groſs miſtake for perſons to place the ſum and ſubſtance of Religion in any poſitive Rites and Ceremonies, how ſo-

(l) Acts vi. 13, 14. (*m*) Acts vii. 8.
(n) Acts x. 38. (*o*) Matt. xxviii. 18.
(p) Matt. xxviii. 19. Coloſ. ii. 11, 12.

lemn and ſacred ſoever. For, theſe things we ſee, are in themſelves, of a *changeable* nature; whereas, on the other hand, the main, eſſential duties and principles of religion, are unchangeably everlaſting. I acknowledge, *it becometh us*, as was hinted before, *to fulfil all righteouſneſs* (*q*), after the example of our great Lord and Maſter, by paying a religious regard to every divine Inſtitution. But then we ſhould always diſtinguiſh between the Religion of the *means*, and the Religion of the *end*; ſo as not to ſet *Rituals* above *Morals*, or ſubſtitute the former in the room of the latter; which have an intrinſic goodneſs and excellency in their own nature, and for that reaſon are of immutable and eternal obligation under all the different and varying modes of Religion. (*r*) *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God!* So as duly to reverence both him and thyſelf at once. Therefore comparatively ſpeaking (*s*), *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God.* (*t*) *For he is not a jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that Circumciſion, which is outward in the fleſh; but he is a jew, who is one inwardly; and Circumciſion is that of the heart, in the ſpirit, and*

(*q*) Matt. iii. 15.
(*r*) Mic. vi. 8.
(*s*) 1 Cor. vii. 19.
(*t*) Rom. ii. 28, 29.

and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God. In ſhort, that is applicable to *Rituals* and *Morals*, in general, which our Lord ſaid to the ſuperſtitious and hypocritical *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who *payed tithe of mint, anniſe, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith*; viz. *theſe things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone* (*u*).

(4.) Mankind are too prone to depart from the original purity of divine Inſtitutions. The command of God was plain and expreſs concerning the time of adminiſtring Circumciſion in ordinary, viz. that it ſhould be on the *eighth day* after the birth (*x*). But becauſe *Iſhmael* happened to be *thirteen* years old, when he was circumciſed at the firſt inſtitution and adminiſtration of Circumciſion in *Abraham*'s family (*y*); therefore, it ſeems, his poſterity, taking pattern thereby, circumciſed their children at the ſame age. And, ſo without any right, they turned an accidental circumſtance into a ſtanding fixed rule. In which caſe, perhaps, they are not ſingular. But certainly it muſt be our greateſt prudence, to keep as near as we can to the original Inſtitutes of Religion, in all caſes, and in all points, without deviating more or leſs from the ſacred rules and preſcriptions,

(*u*) Matt. xxiii. 23. Concerning the proper meaning of this text, ſee Peirce's anſwer to Wells's third Letter.

(*x*) Gen xvii. 12. (*y*) Gen xvii. 25.

of God's word. For, if men allow themſelves to diſpenſe with the divine authority, in one inſtance, they may take the ſame liberty in any other. And what the conſequence muſt be, of ſuch a proceeding, let the world judge.

(5.) There ſeems to be ſome reaſon to reflect, with pious admiration, upon the conduct of divine Providence, in ordering matters ſo, as that *Circumciſion*, the ſign and token of God's covenant with his own peculiar people, was adopted of old by other nations, beſides the *Hebrews*. Even *Egypt* herſelf, the very ſink of *Pagan* ſuperſtition, embraced this religious Rite, and probably, communicated it to ſome of her neighbours and colonies. A circumſtance which may be looked upon with pleaſure, as a kind of omen, and happy preſage of the then future calling of the idolatrous Gentiles, and of their being received into the Church of God, though by a different initiatory Rite, under the goſpel diſpenſation, no leſs than the believing *Jews*. In which light, we may underſtand thoſe words of the evangelical prophet (z), *In that day, ſhall Iſrael be a third with Egypt, and with Aſſyria*, (another *land* of idols, and graven images) *even a bleſſing in the midſt of the land: whom the Lord of hoſts ſhall bleſs, ſaying, Bleſſed be Egypt my people, and Aſſyria the work of my hands, and Iſrael mine inheritance.*

(z) Iſa. xix. 24.

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That there are too many perſons of this character, in the preſent age, is a ſubject of common complaint. But, as *the Cauſes of Incredulity* are various (*a*); ſo there may be *different degrees of Unbelief.* And ſome that are *initiated* in the *leſſer myſteries* of Infidelity, may not be ſo far gone yet, as to be paſt all hopes of recovery from their deluſion. For, a man *walketh in the counſel of the ungodly, and ſtandeth in the way of ſinners,* before he *ſitteth* down *in the ſeat of the ſcornful.* After all, how far the mentioned deſign of this publication is likely to ſucceed and proſper, every competent and candid judge hath a right to determine. But from blind prejudice, and conceited ignorance, or *Science falſely ſo called,* an appeal muſt always lie before the impartial world.

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(*a*) See *Le Clerc* upon this ſubject.

the holy Ghoſt, is not a matter of mere amuſement. *Trifling criticiſms*, are indeed, trifling things. But proper and juſt obſervations upon the *ſcripture ſtile* and *phraſeology*, are of great and neceſſary uſe, for the right underſtanding of God's holy word, and fixing the true ſenſe of the ſacred writings. With what ſucceſs the Author hath attempted any thing in this way, is ſubmitted to the judgment of the learned Critics, whoſe favour and friendſhip he would eſteem a much greater honour, than all the applauſes of the *minute Philoſophers*.

ERRATA.

PAGE 5. line laſt, in the note, for in read i. e. p. 9. l. 6. for *Gaſheſh* r. *Geſhes*. p. 10. l. 14. dele [ibid.] In the note, l. 1. for *Haman* r. *Hamon*. l. 5. for Sanction. r. Sanchoniath. p. 11. l. 11. for *Hychſtros* r. *Hycſhos*. p. 14. l. 27. after party add, if not the principals. for this r. that. p. 15. l. 1, 7, 19. for that r. the.

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